

A BOOK FOR TODAY

The Life of the Average Russian

By REED J. IRVINE

THE STRANGE WORLD OF IVAN IVANOV. By G. Warren Nutter. World. 141 pages. \$5.

G. Warren Nutter, recently appointed Assistant Secretary of Defense, for International Security Affairs, is an authority on the Soviet economy. His book, "Growth of Industrial Production in the Soviet Union," did much to debunk the myth that communism had produced an economic miracle in the U.S.S.R. Nutter demonstrated that the rate of industrial growth in Russia had been about the same under the Communists as it had been during the preceding 50 years of czarist rule.

His latest book, "The Strange World of Ivan Ivanov," was written to show the average American what the life of the average Russian is like. It is frankly intended to heighten the reader's appreciation of his heritage of free and democratic institutions.

The need for such a book is evident from the tendency of some of our young people to develop a romantic attachment to the totalitarian system which characterizes the U.S.S.R., Mao's China, Cuba and North Vietnam. One observes a strange tendency to equate the modest restrictions on freedom and inequities found in our society with the total suppression of liberty under totalitarianism. While Nutter's book will probably not have much influence on the "sophisticates" who have already succumbed to the twisted logic of the New Left, it should be useful to parents and educators who want to equip the young with some useful knowledge about the totalitarian system.

Brief, Readable

It combines the virtues of being brief, readable and authoritative. It focuses on the great differences between life in a totalitarian society where power is highly concentrated and life in a pluralistic, democratic society. Nutter does not pretend that all is perfection in America, but those who see so many flaws in our economic and social order should be sobered by his perspective.

far more serious defects inherent in the Soviet system.

Nutter reminds us that totalitarianism was invented and perfected by the U.S.S.R. One of Lenin's accomplishments was the creation of a tyranny worse than that of the czars disguised by the language and trappings of democracy. One of the distinctive characteristics of this system, which distinguishes it from the tyranny of both the czars and Hitler, is the rigor of the restrictions on emigration and foreign travel. The state becomes a prison for virtually all who are born within its borders. The Berlin Wall symbolizes this situation, but the borders of the U.S.S.R. are as carefully guarded to prevent escapes by Soviet residents as is the wall that divides Berlin.

Travel-loving Americans would find especially galling the severe curbs even on travel within the country. Ivan Ivanov needs a passport even at home. Regular passports are issued only to residents of urban areas. Country dwellers, who comprise over half the Soviet population, are not given passports. This means that they cannot visit an urban area for more than five days at a time, which is the Soviet answer to the old question, "How do you keep them down on the farm?" Nutter says that the Soviet peasantry is, in effect, tied to the land just as it was in the days of serfdom.

State Sole Employer

Totalitarian control over the people is greatly facilitated by the abolition of private property. Since the state is the sole employer and the sole landlord, as well as the possessor

of unlimited police power, Ivan is wholly at the mercy of those who control the state. The penalties for even mild dissent in the U.S.S.R. may range from the loss of one's living quarters to a long term in a brutal prison camp.

Nutter points out that the denial of liberty is not balanced by material gains, as is frequently claimed. He estimates the average income in the U.S.S.R. to be no more than a fifth of the average in the U. S. This low estimate is supported by data he presents on the per capita availability of various consumer goods.

The U.S.S.R. has only one privately owned automobile for every 135 families compared with 1.4 cars per family in the U.S. On a per capita basis we have from five to sixteen times as many radios, television sets, telephones, refrigerators, washing machines and vacuum cleaners. Living space per person in the U.S. is five times that of the U. S. S. R., where there is an average of 2.3 persons per room in urban areas.

If conditions are bad in Soviet cities, they are worse in the country. A prominent Soviet economist is quoted by Nutter as having said that if the people were allowed to leave the countryside hardly anyone would remain behind. Judging from East Germany's experience prior to the erection of the wall, this might also be true of the country as a whole.